

## **Abstract**

Colonial rulers were almost indifferent to spread mass education in the country. Public libraries were established in town and villages in Bengal by the active initiative of common people to spread mass education. Evolution of 275 public libraries in Colonial Bengal during 1800-1947 have been taken in the study. It has framed to trace the genesis of public libraries in Colonial Bengal, to trace the gradual development of public libraries in Bengal, to trace the role of secret societies to develop public libraries, to trace the role of colonial public libraries in preservation as well as dissemination of knowledge, to trace the role of public libraries in social welfare activities, to trace the role of Bengal Library Association to create library awareness among people. A comprehensive list of primary as well as secondary sources used to trace the development of public libraries and community information need of the period. The study in its six chapters observed that most of the libraries during the period were the product of voluntary effort. Since approach of twentieth century public libraries were appearing as strong media to preach nationalism attaching themselves as a branch of secret societies. Rare books, journals, patriotic history and local history are found in their collection. In order to attract mass-base to the library, social services used to perform from the library. Present public library system of both west Bengal and Bangladesh are found as successor of Colonial Public library system in Bengal in many aspects.

Keywords- Public library, Colonial Bengal, Mass education, Secret society, Social service, Library association.